

REMARKS

Claims 43-63 are presently pending in this application. Claims 1-19 and 27-40 were previously pending in this application, but these claims have been cancelled without prejudice. New claims 43-63 have been added to this application in this paper. New claims 43-63 are fully supported in the text of the application on pages 29-41 and in Figures 16-27. Therefore, claims 43-63 do not present new subject matter.

The Examiner indicated that the Information Disclosure Statement filed by the application did not include a clean copy of the PTO/SB/03 form. In accordance with Examiner's request, attached is a clean copy of the PTO/SB/08 form.

Claims 1-19 and 27-40 were rejected in the Office Action dated March 19, 2004, under 35 U.S.C. §§ 103 and 112. With respect to the rejection under Section 103, claims 1-19 and 30-35 were rejected over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 5,227,041 issued to Brogden et al. ("Brogden") and U.S. Patent No. 6,139,712 issued to Patton et al. ("Patton"). The rejections of claims 1-19 and 27-40 are now moot because these claims have been cancelled.

The applicants expressly emphasize that claims 1-19 and 27-40 have been cancelled without prejudice. The applicants accordingly do not concede the merits of the rejections set forth in the Office Action dated March 19, 2004. More specifically, the applicants do not concede that the combination of Brogden and Patton discloses all of the features set forth in any of the original claims, and the applicants also do not concede that the rejections under Section 112 were proper. As such, the applicants specifically reserve the right to pursue the cancelled claims in a continuation application.

New claims 43-60 are also patentable over Brogden, Patton and/or the combination of Brogden and Patton. For example, both of these references fail to disclose or suggest a contact assembly including an electrically conductive base member inclined at an angle sloping toward a workpiece plane with decreasing distance from a central axis of the support member and a plurality of electrically conductive contact members projecting inwardly from the base member. These references also fail to disclose or suggest a contact assembly having (a) a conductive ring member with a

lower region farther away from a workpiece plane than an upper region, and (b) contact members projecting from the upper region. Moreover, a person skilled in the art would not be motivated to come up with the claimed combination of features based upon Brogden and Patton. Therefore, claims 43-63 are patentable over the references applied in the Office Action dated March 19, 2004.

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims in the application comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112 and patentably define over the cited and applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3258.

Respectfully submitted,
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